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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Leonard Cheshire Disability, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.5/2008/1.

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Statement

A worldwide partnership

1. Leonard Cheshire Disability International (an organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council) is a truly global organization working in 54 countries on six continents. We support over 250 independently managed organizations working with disabled people and their families. Together we reach people of all ages of diverse backgrounds and with many different kinds of disabilities.

2. With 60 years of experience, we promote inclusive development – people with disabilities are central to every stage of our projects. All of this is supported by our disability and development research team at University College London and our commitment to testing and spreading good practice. To help bring disability issues to the top of national and global agendas, we also campaign for the human rights of people with disabilities.

3. Our programme areas include:

(a) Education;

(b) Livelihoods;

(c) Health and rehabilitation;

(d) Support for everyday living;

(e) Research;

(f) Campaigning.

An Inclusive Approach to Employment and Poverty Reduction

4. Combating poverty requires a multisectoral, multiactor and consultative approach. The involvement of disabled people in this process cannot be left to goodwill: it must be strategized. A two-track approach is necessary in which both mainstreaming and special focus programmes are implemented. Disabled peoples' organizations have a crucial role in this process at all levels.

5. Disabled people start with a major disadvantage in employment: low expectations in society and sometimes in themselves. Economic empowerment programmes need to find strategies for breaking out of this vicious circle. Empowerment is evident in disabled people who are concerned for the well-being of others as well as themselves, and they can be used as role models in training programmes.

6. An understanding of the economic and social context is vital when planning economic empowerment programmes. The vast majority of working people, including disabled people, in

developing countries work in the informal economy. Jobs and employment are not necessarily useful concepts in rural areas that are dependent on subsistence agriculture. In such areas, economic empowerment programmes need to look for ways in which disabled people can contribute to family income, especially through agriculture.

7. Skills are vital for access to work in urban areas, but must be interpreted more widely than technical skills alone. Competencies include attitudes, knowledge and skills. Training needs to be seen holistically and include lifelong learning and learning by experience.

8. Leonard Cheshire Disability's own programmes recognize that people work in many different ways and include:

(a) Small loans to start businesses;

(b) Training in running the business;

(c) Vocational training;

(d) Making workplaces more accessible;

(e) Promoting the employment rights of disabled people.

9. It is impossible to look at employment alone as a cause of poverty. A key factor in the cause of poverty is, of course, lack of access to education. In many developing countries, over 90 per cent of disabled children do not attend school. Inclusive education offers a solution. By working with local schools, they can be made more accessible, welcoming environments that meet all their students' needs and help to dissolve prejudices among fellow pupils.

10. The year 2007 was not only the mid-way point in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was also the year in which the new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was opened for signature (30 March 2007). Leonard Cheshire Disability believes that with the high profile given to disability by the Convention, now is the perfect time to make disability a cornerstone of the MDGs. Without addressing disability exclusion, the MDGs will not meet their goals.

11. If done properly, the ratification and implementation of the Convention could bring about a sea change in the daily experiences of people with disabilities around the world. This is why advocacy by people with disabilities themselves is so important. Our Young Voices project (active in over 13 countries around the world and involving over 250 young people) is working with groups of young people with disabilities to help them explore how by working together they can use the Convention to fight for their rights. Under this project, groups of young people with disabilities are actively advocating and campaigning for their own rights in countries as diverse as Sri Lanka and Sudan. This is opening the door to tomorrow's leaders.

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Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

Statement submitted by Pax Romana, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

In promoting full employment and decent work for all, it is crucial to focus on contributing factors that will achieve this theme. In developing people who are willing and able to work, it is becoming more important that people are properly enabled and empowered with an appropriate education.

Access to higher education

1. A formal education is essential to the development of people to ready them for work. However, many people are unable to fill many positions because of the lack of access to higher education.

2. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads, "technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."

3. Some employers may offer job-related training to employees or new employees, but this is the exception, not the norm. Technical and professional training through specialized programmes and institutions allows employees to acquire the skills needed to perform the necessary tasks of their position.

4. Although a formal education is necessary in an increasingly competitive environment with limited job opportunities, a formal education is not necessarily enough.

Non-formal education

5. While not forgetting the importance of a formal education, it is equally important to focus on the complementary effects of a non-formal education. Non-formal education allows people to enhance a formal education and encourages lifelong learning. Non-formal education is any organized educational activity outside the established formal system. This form of education empowers job-seekers with skills that employers are looking for. Youth movements are prime examples of effective means of a non-formal education.

6. Some of the key elements of non-formal education in developing people for full employment and decent work for all include:

(a) The appropriation of values;
(b) Personal development, including self-esteem and interpersonal relationships;
(c) Leadership formation;
(d) Critical thinking;
(e) Citizenship;
(f) Conflict resolution;
(g) Encountering and appreciating different cultures;

(h) Developing a global awareness and sense of solidarity;
(i) Participation in the community at the local, national, and global levels;
(j) Service to others;
(k) Empowerment of minorities and the marginalized.

While the list is not exhaustive, it contains elements that youth-led organizations around the world have identified as the benefits of a non-formal education in developing valuable members of any workforce.

7. The benefits of non-formal education in maximizing people's chances of employment include, but are not limited to, taking on a sense of real responsibility, taking initiatives and identifying creative solutions. In an ever increasingly competitive environment, youth-led organizations have been at the forefront of the enhancement of such skills, empowering young people with learning opportunities to acquire adequate tools and competencies necessary for full employment and decent work.

Youth-led organizations

8. Youth have the best understanding of the realities of their own lives. Youth offers employers some of the most dynamic, creative and talented people in the workforce. However, youth continue to be the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the labour market. Engaging youth in youth-led organizations will assist policymakers in the fight against unemployment and underemployment.

9. The exclusion of youth in policymaking processes creates social tension due to the sentiments of being ignored or overlooked. Engaging youth in employment policymaking as consultants and stakeholders can avoid interventions that are ineffective, unpopular and difficult to implement.

10. Recognizing that youth provide an array of realities, it is critical that the United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies continue to engage youth organizations that have a multiplier effect. Such youth-led organizations are accountable to both themselves and their peers, resulting in a more representative voice in creating policies that promote full employment and decent work. Youth-led organizations, such as those of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, which is an informal network of over 30 membership-based international, regional and national youth platforms, have been at the forefront in discussing issues of employment and have taken the initiative to coordinate among themselves for greater cooperation and efficiency.

Inter-agency coordination

11. In the past few years, there has been an increased interest to involve youth-led organizations on the part of various intergovernmental bodies. While it is encouraging to see that youth are increasingly seen as an important stakeholder in the discussion of employment,

there is a major lack of coordination between the inter-governmental agencies with which youth-led organizations are involved.

12. As a result, youth-led organizations have observed the inefficiency of many inter-governmental organizations. The duplication of work is immense and is a hindrance to progress. Greater efforts for inter- and intra-agency coordination is an absolute must in order for the question of decent work and full employment to be properly answered.

13. Recommendations:

(a) Increase the access to higher education;
(b) Increase the promotion of non-formal education;
(c) Increase the engagement of youth-led organizations;
(d) Increase the coordination of inter-governmental organizations.